DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 353 821 FL 020 911

AUTHOR Gonzalez, Rosa Maria
TITLE Title VII New Comers Program, 1991-92 Final Report.
INSTITUTION Austin Independent School District, Tex. Office of Research and Evaluation.
PUB DATE Aug 92
NOTE 39p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

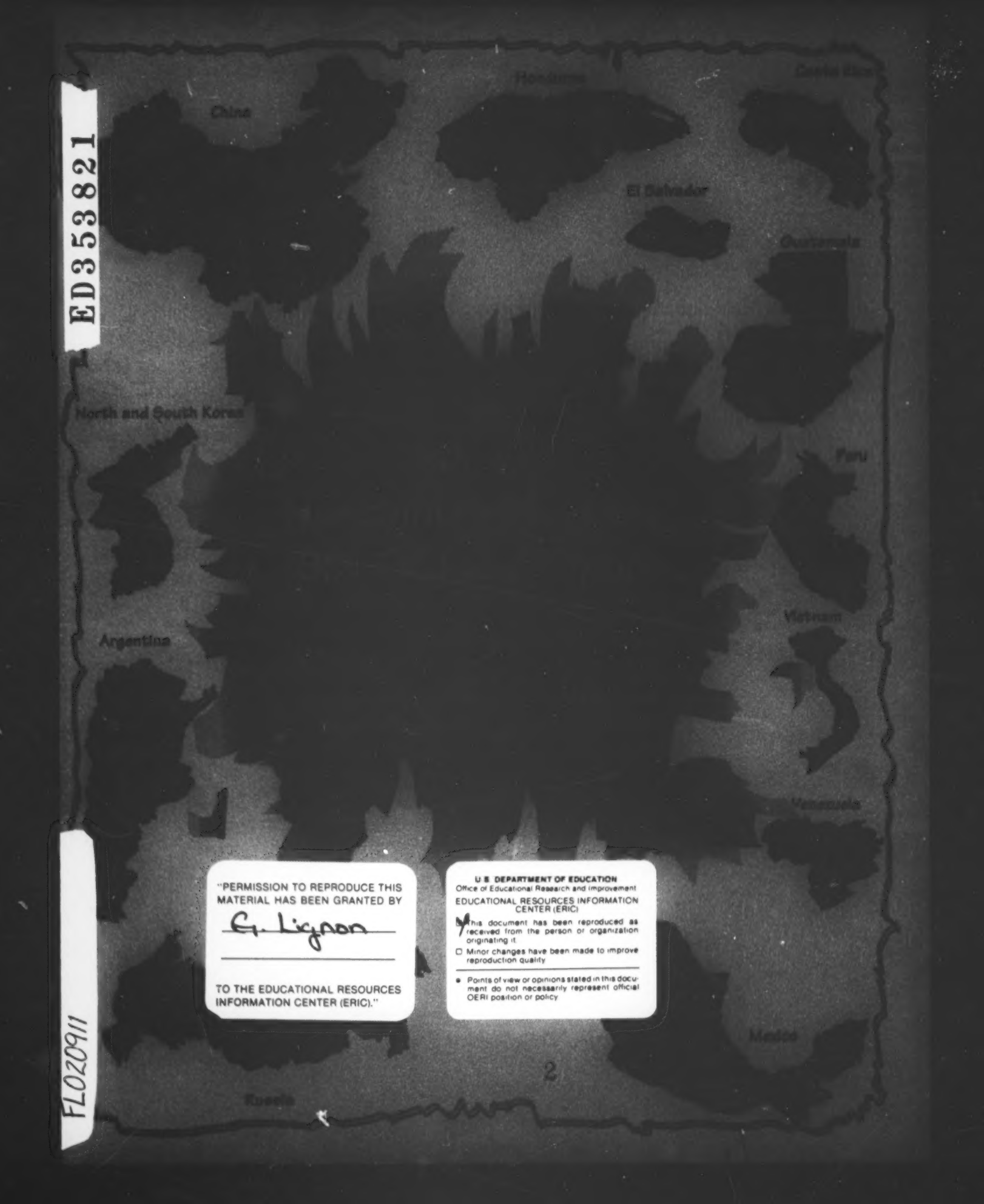
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; *Academic Persistence; Attendance Patterns; *English (Second Language); High Schools; High School Students; *Immigrants; Language Skills; *Limited English Speaking; Literacy Education; Program Descriptions; Program Effectiveness; Second Language Instruction; Spanish Speaking; *Student Characteristics
IDENTIFIERS *Austin Independent School District TX; Elementary Secondary Education Act Title VII

ABSTRACT

The Title VII Newcomers Program of the Austin (Texas) Independent School District served 104 students in its second year of operation. The program was designed to improve the English language proficiency and academic skills of limited-English-proficient (LEP), immigrant students in 3 high schools. Most were native Spanish speakers. Major findings of the program evaluation for the 1991-92 school year include the following: (1) students are predominantly low-income, over-age for their grade, dominant or monolingual in a language other than English, and academically below grade level but demonstrate a commitment to their education; (2) participants, on average, showed improvement in language skills; (3) compared to similar LEP students, the participants performed better on measures of school success such as attendance and grade point average; they improved credits earned and had a lower dropout rate than anticipated; (4) staff opinion was that the program was very effective and assisted students in making the transition to English and the school culture; and (5) participant opinion was that the program was very beneficial academically, linguistically, and socially. Program and budget data and profiles of two graduating students are included. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED353821



"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

G. Lignon

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

FL020911

Title VII Newcomers Program
1991-92 Final Report

Executive Summary

Austin Independent School District
Department of Management Information
Office of Research and Evaluation

Author: Rosa María González

Program Description

In 1990-91, AISD was awarded a three-year Title VII grant to serve a population of limited English-proficient (LEP) high school students termed "newcomers." In addition to being limited English proficient, these students had recently arrived in the United States. The Title VII Newcomers Program was funded for its second year during the summer of 1991. For the purpose of the program, a newcomer was defined as a student who had been in the United States for one year or less. These students typically have limited or interrupted schooling in their home countries and a wide range of literacy skills. Increasing numbers of immigrants continue enrolling at three high school campuses, Austin, Lanier, and Reagan. To serve the special needs of such students, AISD developed its Title VII Newcomers Program. All language backgrounds are eligible for the program, with Spanish being the primary language of most (68%) of the students.

The goal of the Title VII Newcomers Program is to improve the English language proficiency and the achievement skills of the targeted students. The program is designed to provide a sheltered environment for its participants. Class size is kept relatively small, and the students receive three hours of intensive English instruction daily which includes listening, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. In addition, students may enroll in a variety of subjects areas to complete their schedules. A teacher and teacher assistant are assigned to each of the three campuses. The intent of the program is for students to attend regular English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at the end of one year. If a student entered the program late in the school year, or is unable to make the transition, allowances can be made at the discretion of the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee located at each campus.

In the 1991-92 school year, a total of 104 students was served by the Title VII Newcomers Program.

Major Findings

1. Title VII students are predominantly low income, overage for their grade, dominant or monolingual in a language other than English, and below grade level academically. Nonetheless, these at-risk students demonstrated a commitment to attending school and moving forward with their education (Pages 5-8).

2. Title VII newcomers demonstrated an average gain of 16 raw score points on the Language Assessment Battery (LAB) from pre- to posttest, which indicates they are improving their abilities in English (Page 9).

3. Compared to similar LEP students, the Title VII newcomers performed better on measures of school success such as school attendance and grade point average. They demonstrated improvement in the credits earned, and their obtained dropout rate was lower than the predicted rate (Pages 13-15).

4. The opinion of the staff in general was that the program was very effective and that it assisted the students in making the transition to English and to the school culture (Pages 25-28).

5. The opinion of the newcomers was that the program was very beneficial not only academically but also as they made the transition to a different language and to the culture of the United States (Pages 21-24).

Budget Implications

Mandate: Required by external funding agent

Fund Amount: $140,000

Funding Source: Federal

Implications:

The program will be funded for one more year. The program addresses the language needs of recently arrived immigrant students. By providing for personnel, instructional materials, and computers, the program facilitates the acquisition of English, making the transition to the school environment and adapting to a new culture possible for a very specific population. The long-range goal of the program is to provide assistance initially, so that these students will remain in school and graduate.

The program addresses AISD's first two strategic objectives: 1) "one hundred percent of all students who enter AISD will graduate," and 2) "every student will function at his/her optimal level of achievement and will progress successfully through the system."

Without the monies from Title VII, the special services, instructional materials, and computers would probably not be available to serve the distinct linguistic needs of this population.

PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS SUMMARY

Title VII Newcomers Program 1991-92

EFFECT	COST	PROGRAM
+	$$$	Title VII Newcomers Program 1991-92

Effect is expressed as contributing to any of the five AISD strategic objectives.

+ Positive, needs to be maintained or expanded.

O Not significant, needs to be improved and modified.

- Negative, needs major modification or replacement.

Blank Unknown

Cost is the expense over the regular District per-student expenditure.

O No cost or minimal.

$ Indirect costs and overhead, but no separate budget.

$$ Some direct costs, but under $500 per student.

$$$ Major direct costs for teachers, staff, and/or equipment in the range of $500 per student or more.

NOTE: The program's funds are spent on personnel (teacher assistants providing direct services to students), instructional materials, and equipment (computers).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY i

PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS SUMMARY ii

CONCLUSIONS 1

INTRODUCTION 1

- Background 1
- Evaluation Overview 2
- Program Description 3
- 1991-92 Budget 4
- Student Characteristics 5

OUTCOMES 9

- English Language Proficiency 9
- Achievement 11
- Other Measures of School Success 13
- Orientation to the United States 15
- Effectiveness of Teacher Assistants 16
- Costs 18

SERVICES 19

- Training Provided to Teachers and Teacher Assistants 19
- Educational Opportunities for Teachers and Teacher Assistants 19
- Outreach to Parents 20

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES 21

Summary of Student Survey 21

Summary of Staff Survey 25

1991-92 Newcomers Success Stories 28

STATUS OF FORMER (1990-91) TITLE VII STUDENTS 30

Other Measures of School Success, Achievement, and Graduation 30

Profiles of Two Graduating Former Title VII Students 31

REFERENCES 32

CONCLUSIONS

In the 1991-92 school year, the Title VII Newcomers Program provided a wide range of services. Limited-English-proficient (LEP) students, their parents, their teachers, and teacher assistants benefitted from Title VII funds. Despite the considerable obstacles of language and cultural adjustment, program students demonstrated their commitment to attending school and to moving forward with their education. The newcomers performed better on such measures as attendance, grades, credits earned, and dropout rate than a comparison group. Program staff reported that the program was effective and beneficial to the newcomers. Many program strengths were identified, and weaknesses were targeted as areas for growth and improvement. For these reasons, the second year of the Title VII Newcomers Program may be seen as helping students to acquire some of the necessary skills for ensuring academic success.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

For many years, AISD has been awarded U.S. Department of Education Title VII funds to supplement its regular bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. In the 1989-90 school year, as the District was completing a five-year grant cycle which helped to serve middle school and high school LEP students, it became apparent that increasing numbers of LEP students who were new arrivals to the U.S. had begun enrolling in District high schools. The higher enrollment of recently arrived immigrants was especially true at Austin, Lanier, and Reagan High Schools. For staff, it was clear that the standard offering of ESL classes supplementing the regular school curriculum would not be adequate to meet the needs of this growing population. The idea which was developed was to make these three campuses Newcomer centers. Targeted students could then be provided with the additional assistance needed for them to acquire skills in the English language, become oriented to the U.S. culture, and begin as soon as possible to earn necessary credits and satisfy all requirements toward high school graduation.

In its first year, 1990-91, the program served a total of 108 students. In 1991-92, 104 students were served. By August 1991 the Title VII Newcomers Program was well established in the three high schools and able to accommodate students from their respective attendance areas as well as curriculum transfers. At this time, students from other attendance areas have expressed an interest in the Newcomers Program, but they have had difficulty with making the necessary transportation arrangements. Johnston, McCallum, and Crockett High Schools have inquired about the Newcomers Program's model and are considering the possibility of replicating it on their campuses.

EVALUATION OVERVIEW

The grant awarded AISD by the U.S. Department of Education specifies that there be an independent evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the District's Title VII program. During the program's second year of operation the evaluation focused on the following main questions:

- Did the Title VII newcomers improve their English language acquisition as a result of the program?
- Did the Title VII newcomers improve their academic achievement skills as a result of the program?
- Did the program effectively orient the students to their new life in the U.S.?
- Has the presence of the teacher assistant in the Title VII Newcomers Program classroom had a positive impact on the students?

Evaluation data were collected from a variety of sources:

- The Student Master File and the LEP File provided basic information about the students such as home language, Language Assessment Battery (LAB) scores, language dominance, school mobility, and program entry and exit dates.
- ORE's generic evaluation system (GENESYS) supplied demographic and achievement information for both former and current newcomer students.
- Informal, scheduled interviews were conducted with program staff to obtain and update student information and to gather opinion information about the Title VII Newcomers Program. Administrators, teachers, teacher assistants, and Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) chairpersons completed a staff survey in which they expressed their perceptions about the program. Student surveys were completed by program participants in an effort to gather their assessment of the Title VII Newcomers Program.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In 1990-91, AISD was awarded a three-year Title VII grant to serve a population of limited-English-proficient (LEP) high school students termed "newcomers." In addition to being limited-English-proficient, these students had recently arrived in the United States. The Title VII Newcomers Program was funded for its second year during the summer of 1991. For the purposes of the program , **a newcomer was defined as a student who has been in the United States for one year or less**. These students typically have limited or interrupted schooling in their home countries and a wide range of literacy skills. Increasing numbers of immigrants continue enrolling at three high school campuses, Austin, Lanier, and Reagan. To serve the special needs of such students AISD developed its Title VII Newcomers Program. All language backgrounds are eligible for the program, with Spanish being the primary language of most (68%) of the students.

The goal of the Title VII Newcomers Program is to improve the English language proficiency and the achievement skills of the target students. The program is designed to provide a sheltered environment for its participants. Class size is kept relatively small, and the students receive three hours of intensive English instruction daily which includes listening, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. The students receive credit for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Correlated Language Arts, and Reading Improvement. In addition, students may enroll in a variety of subject areas (e.g. pre-algebra, algebra, biology, typing, Spanish, art, and physical education) to complete their schedules. A teacher and a teacher assistant are assigned to each of the three campuses. The intent of the program is for students to attend regular English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at the end of one year. If a student entered the program late in the school year, or is unable to make the transition, allowances can be made at the discretion of the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee located at each campus. In the 1991-92 school year, a total of 104 students was served by the Title VII Newcomers Program.

1991-92 BUDGET

The total budget for the 1991-92 Title VII Newcomers Program was $140,000.

Total funding for the second year was identical to the first year; however, there were some minor changes in certain line items. These funds provided multilevel educational materials for the three program sites located at Austin, Lanier, and Reagan High Schools ($15,176). Additional computer equipment was purchased. Austin and Lanier High Schools received two new computers each, and Reagan High School received three computers ($17,500). Funds were spent on staff development ($1,200), salaries for three teacher assistants ($73,873), and for program evaluation ($12,931). The cost per student in 1991-92 was $1,346.

REASON	ALLOCATION
Teacher Assistants (3)	$58,419
Evaluation Associate (1/2)	10,673
FICA	5,330
Health Insurance	6,475
Workers Compensation	577
Teachers Retirement	5,330
Equipment (3-campuses)	17,500
Instructional Materials	15,176
Stipends (Staff Development)	1,200
College Tuition	7,000
Regular Fees	750
Consultant	3,100
Out of District Travel (program staff)	1,290
Out of District Travel (administrators)	4,000
Indirect Costs (2.148%)	3,179
TOTAL	140,000

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Like the newcomers from the first program year (1990-91), the second-year students were predominantly from low-income families, overage for their grade (therefore at risk), and monolingual or dominant in a primary language other than English.

The ethnic diversity of the newcomers population has changed to some extent from last year. This year the program had fewer students from Spanish-speaking countries than last year. Most (68%) of the 104 students served were from Spanish-speaking countries; among these countries were Mexico, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, Peru, Venezuela and Argentina. Of the remaining students, 24% were from Vietnam, and 7% were from Russia, China, and Korea. Nearly all (84%) were from low-income families and were either dominant (80%) or monolingual (14%) in their primary language.

The age range of newcomers was from 14 to 20 with most of the students (77%) being 15 to 18 years old. Age is an important variable because being overage for the grade (two or more years older than expected for the grade level as of September 1) is one of the key indicators of a student's being "at risk" for dropping out. Of the newcomers, 59% were overage for their grade level.

Figure 1 shows the grade distribution of Title VII program students.

FIGURE 1
GRADE LEVELS OF 1991-92 TITLE VII NEWCOMERS

Grade	# of Students	% of Students
9	64	62%
10	26	25%
11	14	13%
TOTAL	104	100%

Figure 2 shows how many of the newcomers were overage and potentially at risk for their grade levels. As shown in Figure 2, a high percentage of the newcomers is at risk, particularly at grade 9, where two thirds of the students are overage by an average of three and one-half years.

FIGURE 2
TITLE VII NEWCOMERS 1991-92 AT RISK BY BEING OVERAGE

2 YEARS OR MORE				1 YEAR OR MORE			
Grade	No.	Percent*	Average	Grade	No.	Percent	Average
9	42	66%	3.46	9	12	19%	1.19
10	13	50%	3.24	10	5	19%	1.21
11	6	43%	2.63	11	5	36%	1.50

* Percentage is within grade level

The remaining 21 students are not overage, but continue to be at risk because of their lack of English proficiency.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Figure 3 illustrates the language dominance of the newcomers.

FIGURE 3
LANGUAGE DOMINANCE OF 1991-92 TITLE VII NEWCOMERS

DOMINANCE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	% OF STUDENTS
A/Monolingual	15	14%
B/Dominant	83	80%
C/Bilingual	2	2%
Not in file	4	4%
TOTAL	104	100%

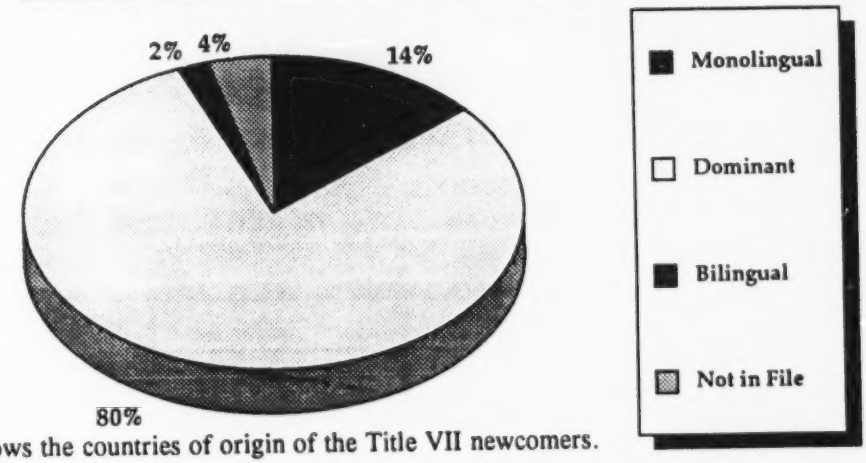
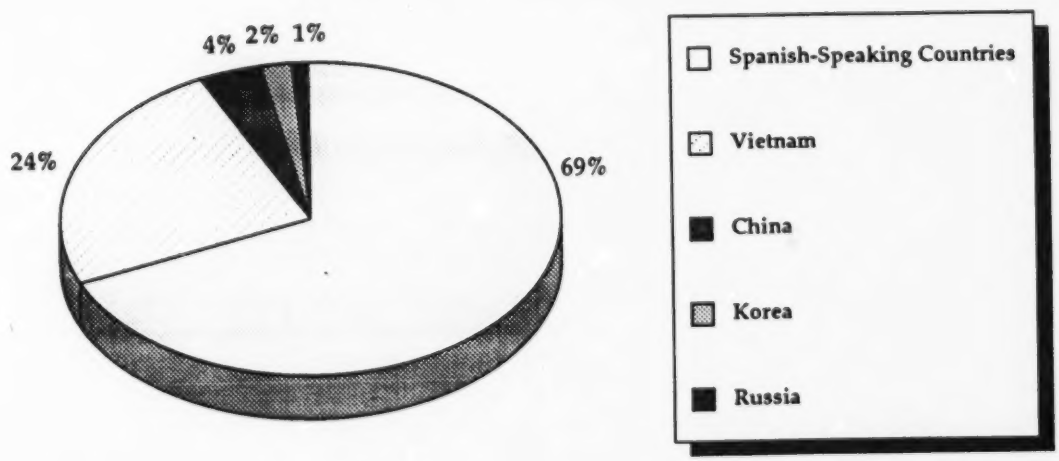


Figure 4 shows the countries of origin of the Title VII newcomers.

FIGURE 4
COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN OF
1991-92 TITLE VII NEWCOMERS



EST COPY AVAILABLE

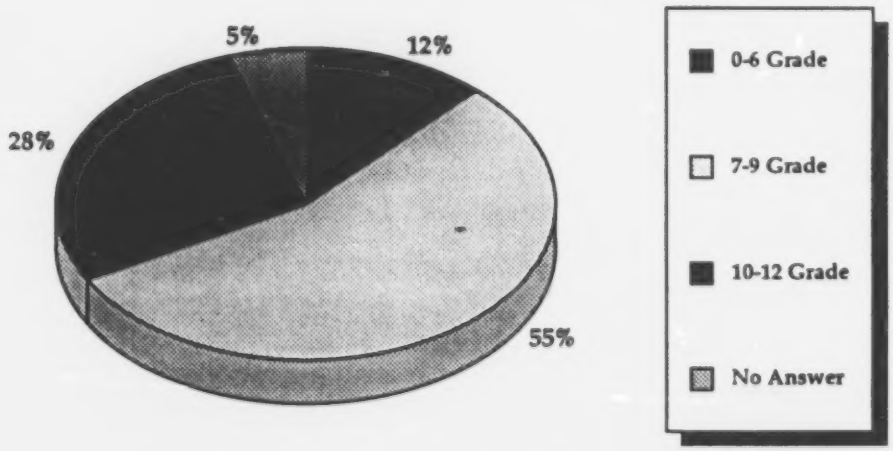
Figure 5 shows the number and percent of students from rural and urban areas in their home countries.

FIGURE 5
URBAN/RURAL ORIGIN OF 1991-92 TITLE VII NEWCOMERS

Area	Number of Students	% of Students
Urban	70	67%
Rural	30	29%
No Answer	4	4%
TOTAL	104	100%

Figure 6 illustrates the years of education the program students had in their home countries. Two thirds of the students (67%) had primary and secondary schooling (defined as grades 1-9), and 28% had preparatory schooling (grades 10-12).

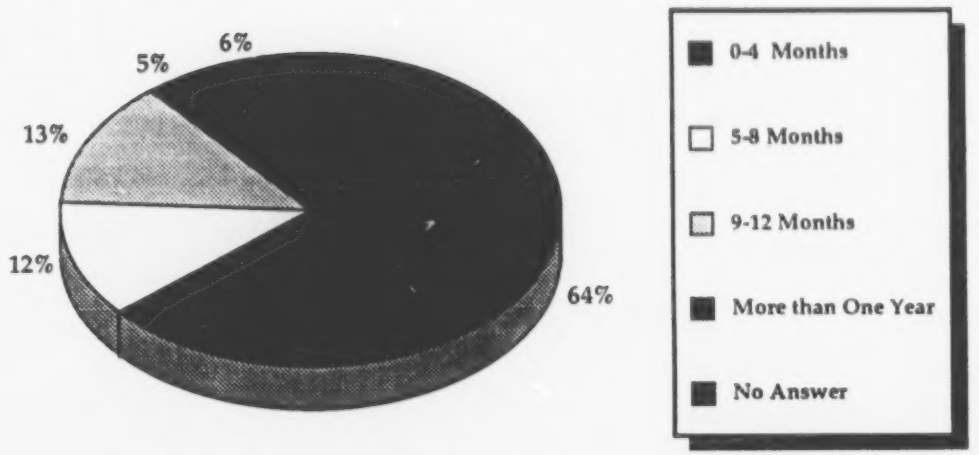
FIGURE 6
1991-92 TITLE VII NEWCOMERS' EDUCATION
IN THEIR HOME COUNTRIES



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Figure 7 illustrates the length of time the newcomers had been in the U.S. prior to enrolling in the program. The majority of students (64%) had been in the country no more than 4 months; 89% had been in the U.S. for one year or less.

FIGURE 7
LENGTH OF TIME IN THE U.S. FOR
1991-92 TITLE VII NEWCOMERS



OUTCOMES

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

1991-92 Student Performance on the LAB

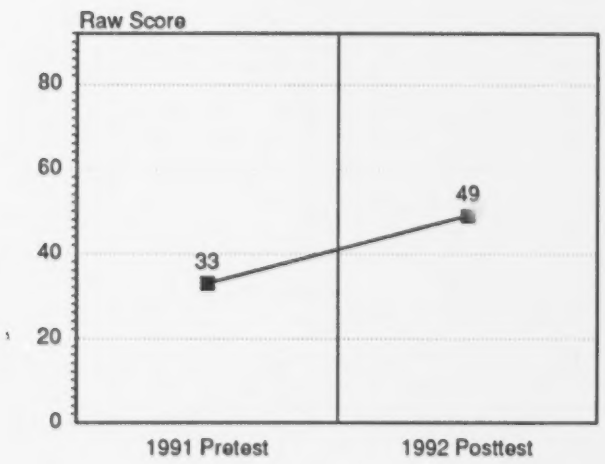
Title VII newcomers demonstrated an average gain of 16 raw score points on the Language Assessment Battery, indicating that the students were improving their abilities in English.

The Language Assessment Battery (LAB) is a language proficiency test used to evaluate English oral language acquisition. The LAB has been used by AISD for many years to measure English language skills of LEP students. The maximum raw score on the LAB is 92. All newcomers were given a pretest in the fall 1991 semester or spring 1992 semester. The students were administered a posttest in May 1992. Pretest and posttest scores were compared to determine if the students, on the average, had improved their English proficiency. Improved performance would be indicative of increased proficiency in the English language.

There was a total of 80 students from the three campuses who had taken both pre- and posttests on the dates given above. The average score for the pretest was 33, while the average score for the posttest was 49 (see Figure 8). This average gain of 16 raw score points indicated that the students were learning more English.

Figure 8 shows the performance on the LAB of the Title VII newcomers.

FIGURE 8
TITLE VII NEWCOMERS
1991-92 AVERAGE LAB SCORE GAINS



Whether this gain represents a good, or typical, gain for these students is unclear. In previous years, Title VII LEP students have shown similar gains. Title VII newcomers were tested in the fall or spring semesters depending on program entry; therefore, the number of months between pretest and posttest varied across students. Individual gains were not being compared; only the group average was considered. Because of the variance in the pre- and posttest time periods, this year's and previous years' Title VII students may not be comparable. Nonetheless, the performance of previous years' students at least provides a context by which to assess the gains made by this year's students.

This is not to suggest that the newcomers are proficient yet in English. In 1976, the New York City Public Schools, in which the LAB was normed, used the 20th percentile rank, which corresponds to a raw score in the mid-70's, as the cutoff for what they termed "effectiveness" in English. Although this is an arbitrary cutoff point, it can be of use in giving meaning to the Title VII newcomers' 1991-92 average posttest score of 49. For these students to score 70+ on the LAB, they would need to answer approximately 55% more of the test items correctly. Gains were clearly accomplished by the students, but the group continues to be in need of specialized instruction.

For comparison purposes, the Title VII newcomers will be compared to a group consisting of nonprogram students whose language dominance is A or B, dominant or monolingual in the native tongue, who are attending AISD high schools, but who are not recent arrivals to the United States. The number of students in the comparison group is 362.

ACHIEVEMENT

TAAS

The Title VII newcomers performed below District averages on the TAAS. Compared to similar LEP students, more Title VII newcomers mastered the Mathematics Test at the exit level.

The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) is the State-mandated, criterion-referenced testing program which is administered to students in grades 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11 (Exit Level). The Exit-Level tests must be mastered as part of graduation requirements and are offered two times a year. LEP students may be given a one-time-only LEP exemption at grades 3, 5, 7, and 9. A LEP exemption is not available at the exit level.

Ninth-Grade TAAS

Of the 42 newcomers who were eligible to take the ninth-grade TAAS in October 1991:

- 37 students (86%) took the LEP exemption, and
- 6 students (14%) took the TAAS test.

None of the newcomers mastered any of the TAAS tests.

Eleventh-Grade TAAS

In October 1991 only four newcomers were eligible to take the Exit-Level test.

- Two students (50%) passed the mathematics portion.
- Two students (50%) did not master any tests.

In April 1992 only five students were eligible to be tested. Of the five students taking the Exit-Level TAAS, two students were from the fall semester and three were from the spring semester.

- Two students (40%) mastered the mathematics portion of the test.
- Three students (60%) did not master any tests.

These results suggest that, when eligible to be tested, the newcomers seem to pass the mathematics section of the Exit Level TAAS on their first attempt. This success may be attributed to mathematics skills not being as language dependent as the skills assessed in the reading and writing sections of the test.

NAPT

The performance of the Title VII newcomers on the NAPT is well below that of the District and generally below that of the comparison group. However, out of 15 comparisons of their performance with that of the other LEP students, there were two comparisons in which the newcomers' mean grade equivalents were higher than those of the comparison group, and one in which the mean grade equivalents were the same.

AISD administers a norm-referenced test to all students, in grades 1-11, who are considered capable of attaining a valid score. In the spring of 1992, at the high school level, the Norm-Referenced Assessment Program for Texas (NAPT) was administered at grades 9-11.

Figure 9 shows the performance of the Title VII newcomers who were administered the NAPT in spring 1992, as well as the performances of the comparison group and all AISD students.

FIGURE 9
1991-92 NAPT MEAN GRADE EQUIVALENT SCORES

	Title VII Newcomers		Comparison Students		All AISD Students	
	N	GE	N	GE	N	GE
READING						
Grade						
9	32	5.0	109	6.8	4095	10.3
10	16	5.8	96	6.2	3083	11.8
11	6	5.7	65	6.7	2598	12.3
MATHEMATICS						
Grade						
9	33	6.3	110	6.9	4129	9.7
10	**16**	**9.7**	**96**	**8.6**	**3083**	**11.5**
11	**6**	**9.5**	**64**	**9.5**	**2609**	**11.9**
LANGUAGE						
Grade						
9	31	4.9	111	6.9	4048	10.5
10	15	5.5	90	7.0	3036	11.5
11	**6**	**8.1**	**65**	**7.9**	**2564**	**12.2**
SOCIAL STUDIES						
Grade						
9	29	5.2	111	7.3	4066	10.0
10	15	7.7	93	8.7	3056	12.0
11	6	8.1	65	8.8	2563	13.1
SCIENCE						
Grade						
9	28	7.4	111	7.9	4070	11.3
10	15	7.4	94	8.8	3050	12.8
11	6	8.1	65	9.2	2557	13.3

OTHER MEASURES OF SCHOOL SUCCESS

One way to evaluate whether students in the District are succeeding in their education is to look at indices like attendance, dropout rate, grade point average, etc. The Office of Research and Evaluation has designed a special set of computer programs called the GENeric Evaluation SYStem (GENESYS) to gather outcome information on programs of interest. The results from these programs were used for most of the following analyses.

Graduation Rate

Because there were no 12th-grade Title VII newcomers in 1991-92, the graduation rate will not be discussed. The graduation rate of former Title VII newcomers is discussed in the section on "Status of Former Students" (see Graduation section p. 30).

Dropouts

At the high school level, the Title VII newcomers' dropout rate was higher than that of the comparison group. However, fewer newcomers dropped out than predicted from their risk factors, indicating the success of the program in dropout prevention.

The problem of school dropouts is a tremendous concern nationwide. As a group, the newcomers are at a greater risk because they exhibit more of the characteristics associated with the population that tends to drop out of high school. The Title VII Newcomers Program provides a supportive environment that makes a concerted effort to enhance the students' academic skills with the purpose of keeping them in school. *The predicted dropout rate for the newcomers was higher than the obtained dropout rate, meaning that the program did better than anticipated in keeping students in school.*

Figure 10 shows dropout rates (through the fifth 6th-weeks period of the 1991-92 school year) for Title VII newcomers and other similar LEP high school students.

FIGURE 10
1991-92 TITLE VII NEWCOMERS VS. COMPARISON GROUP
DROPOUT RATES/PREDICTED AND OBTAINED

		DROPOUT RATES	
Group	N	Predicted Rate	Obtained Rate
Title VII Newcomers	104	9.1%	2.9%
Comparison Group	362	5.8%	0.3%

Credits Earned

Title VII newcomers were able to earn academic credits at a slightly lower rate during the fall semester, and at a slightly higher rate during the spring semester, when compared with similar LEP students.

High school students must earn 2.5 to 3.0 credits per semester in order to meet graduation requirements. Some students earn no grade for a course because of incompletes or unexcused absences; these credits are sometimes credited to them later.

Title VII newcomers were slightly below the minimum graduation credits during the fall semester, but showed improvement in the spring semester. When compared to LEP A and B students at AISD high schools the newcomers performed at a lower rate than the comparison group in the fall semester, and at a higher rate in the spring semester.

Figure 11 shows a comparison of these groups and their credits earned.

FIGURE 11
1991-92 TITLE VII NEWCOMERS VS. COMPARISON GROUP
CREDITS EARNED

Group	Fall 1991 N	Fall 1991 Credits Earned	Spring 1992 N	Spring 1992 Credits Earned
Title VII Newcomers	74	2.4	83	2.5
Comparison Group	338	2.5	338	2.3

Grade Point Average

Title VII newcomers made higher grades than similar LEP students at the high school level.

Grades are assigned on a 100-point scale with 70 being the cutoff for passing. The average of all grades received is the student's grade point average (GPA). Title VII newcomers had higher GPA's during the fall and spring semesters than those of the comparison group, though the grades of both groups were in the B range (80-90). The average GPA's are shown in Figure 12.

FIGURE 12
1991-92 TITLE VII NEWCOMERS VS. COMPARISON GROUP
GRADE POINT AVERAGE

Group	Fall 1991 N	Fall 1991 GPA	Spring 1992 N	Spring 1992 GPA
Title VII Newcomers	74	82.3	82	83.1
Comparison Group	335	80.3	355	80.1

Attendance

Title VII newcomers had a similar attendance rate, on the average, to the comparison group during the fall semester, and a higher attendance rate during the spring semester than that of similar LEP students in the District. Newcomers attended classes at higher rates than high school students districtwide.

Attendance rates were examined to see if Title VII newcomers were present for more classes than similar LEP students in the District. Newcomers attended classes at a similar rate to the comparison group during the fall semester, and there was an increase in the attendance rate of the newcomers during the spring semester. When the attendance of newcomers was compared to the attendance rate for senior high at the district level, the rate for the newcomers was higher for both semesters (see Figure 13).

FIGURE 13
1991-92 TITLE VII NEWCOMERS VS. COMPARISON GROUP AND DISTRICT ATTENDANCE RATES

	FALL 1991		SPRING 1992	
GROUP	**N**	**ATTENDANCE %**	**N**	**ATTENDANCE %**
Title VII Newcomers	80	95.1%	98	94.7%
Comparison Group	339	95.3%	361	93.5%
District	-	92.5%	-	91.1%

ORIENTATION TO THE UNITED STATES

The Title VII newcomers were provided with a variety of activities designed to expose and familiarize them with the culture in the United States. Some activities were in the classroom in the form of reading selections, class discussions, and small group sessions. In an effort to alleviate some of the conflict that arises from the effect of "culture shock," a bilingual psychologist was hired to conduct small group sessions with the newcomers. The psychologist made three visits to each of the schools during the fall and spring semesters. The psychologist addressed several issues among them were: cultural values and conflict, family and peer relationships, and substance abuse. In the evaluations the students said the presentations had been very informative, and they expressed their appreciation for having a presenter come into the classroom. The students said they liked the presentations very much and welcomed the opportunity to participate in discussions.

In the evaluations the students were asked to write down some topics that would be of interest for future discussions. The following list includes some of the issues mentioned by the newcomers:

- Information on careers and future training opportunities,
- Strategies on how to stay in school, and how to acquire skills to "get ahead" in the future,
- Family relationships and how to improve them,
- Adolescence and peer relationships,
- Sexuality and sexually transmitted diseases, and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- Use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHER ASSISTANTS

Historical Context

The effectiveness of the teacher assistant (formerly, teacher aide) in improving student achievement is an issue that has been of interest to AISD for many years. Previous ORE studies have not supported the effectiveness of elementary bilingual aides. Seventeen years ago, in 1975, in an evaluation of Project Assist, ORE reported that the presence of teacher aides in the classroom did not lead to improvement in achievement. Other findings were that the teacher aides had not been adequately trained, had been utilized in several other areas aside from instruction, and that their role and place in the classroom needed additional clarification (Derby 1976). The Title VII project evaluation that same year found that the more instructional adults present in the classroom, the lower the achievement of students (Wilkinson 1976). As a result of these findings, "Instructional aides in the bilingual program were used to reinforce what the teacher presented but not to present information for the first time. They also helped in the preparation of materials before and after school and with testing" (Schuyler, 1987).

In 1985-86, ten years later, ORE was again asked, both for economic and educational reasons, to provide information on whether elementary bilingual aides were increasing the achievement of students beyond that found in classrooms of LEP students who had no aides. Analyses revealed that, on the average, those not served by a bilingual aide showed progress about the same or significantly greater than that evident for the group served by an aide. Thus, the results did not support the effectiveness of bilingual elementary aides for LEP students (Schuyler, 1986). Based partly on these findings, AISD dropped funding for all elementary bilingual aides in 1986-87; two bilingual aides were retained at the secondary level.

Beginning in 1990-91, the Title VII Newcomers Program utilized bilingual teacher assistants, paired with bilingual teachers, as a main component of the program, thus reopening the question of the effectiveness of teacher assistants for LEP students. Rumbaut (1991) reported that staff opinion about the teacher assistants in the Newcomers Program was mixed, but she did not attempt to assess the impact of the assistants on student achievement. She noted that the effectiveness of assistants would remain an important evaluation question in the second and third years of the program.

In the second year of the Title VII Newcomers Program, **staff resources again did not permit a statistical analysis of the impact of teacher assistants on student achievement**. However, information was collected which has a bearing on the issue. Much of the national research on teacher aides in the 1960s and 1970s focused on their training and role in the classroom (Wilkinson 1976). ORE findings in the mid-70s mirrored these concerns, suggesting that given their limited education (high school diploma or GED generally), aides had too much responsibility for the primary instruction of students.

Teacher Assistants in the Newcomers Program

The primary task of the teacher and the teacher assistant team in the Title VII Newcomers Program is to provide ESL instruction to the students. Only the teacher assistant positions are funded by the program. The teacher assistants in the Newcomers Program differ in several ways from the teacher aides of previous years. The teacher assistants in the program work only with high school level students, are under ongoing supervision, all have college degrees, and have had considerable training in issues pertaining to second language acquisition. Because their assignment is to assist with ESL instruction, the effectiveness of the teacher assistants on student achievement can be measured to the extent that they impact the newcomers' acquisition of English.

The role of the teacher assistants during the first year (1990-91) of Title VII Newcomers Program was in the process of being defined; therefore, better communication between teacher and teacher assistant was noted as one aspect of the program needing improvement (Rumbaut, 1991). As the Title VII Newcomers Program began its second year, there was more programmatic experience to build on, and the teacher assistants had been in the schools for one year. All classroom staff had been hired on time, the assistants had worked as part of a team, and the "new" (to the program) ESL teachers could benefit from the experience of the teacher assistants. The responses in both staff and student surveys conveyed a consistency in the role of the teacher assistant. Some of the problems from the previous year had been resolved, and the second year could begin with a more definitive sense of direction since guidelines had been established.

Staff Survey

In the Staff Survey the teacher assistants were very precise in describing their role. Among their duties they listed:

- To assist ESL teachers in planning, teaching, and managing classroom activities,
- To assist ESL teachers in small group activities, or with the group at large,
- To assist students directly by providing tutoring in ESL as well other school subjects,
- To assist students with translations whenever necessary,
- To administer the LAB tests,
- To help students with their academic schedules, and
- To work with small groups of students on the computers.

The list is not all inclusive, but it delineates the primary duties of the teacher assistants from their perspective. This list is consistent with the role assigned to teacher assistants by the coordinator of the Title VII Newcomers Program.

Student Survey

A list of roles or duties for the teacher assistants was given to the newcomers in the Student Survey. They were asked to mark the ways in which they were helped by the teacher assistant. The following items received the highest marks:

▸ Practiced English through conversation	81%
▸ Worked with small groups of students	80%
▸ Assisted in using the computer	60%
▸ Translated for me with other teachers	57%
▸ Helped with preparing school schedules	51%

Coordinator Interview

In the exit interview with the bilingual program coordinator, several questions related to the teacher assistants were asked. In the perspective of the coordinator, the assistants' role was clearly defined; most important was their bilingualism which helped students with translations with content area teachers. Also their presence in the classroom added diversity to the instructional process. Two assistants have continued to enhance their education while in the Title VII Program (see "Educational Opportunities for Teachers and Teacher Assistants" p.19).

Summary

Now, at the conclusion of the second year of the Title VII Newcomers Program, some questions about the effectiveness of the teacher assistants remain. Specifically, two central questions which have not yet been fully addressed by current research need consideration:

1. To what extent do the findings about elementary bilingual aides generalize to the secondary level?

2. Can teacher assistants be used in a manner which makes a significant contribution to student achievement?

From a programmatic standpoint, it is evident that the teacher assistants perform many functions, and that their role is central to the program. By assisting with academic preparation, careful planning, and working directly under the supervision of the ESL teacher, the teacher assistants relieve the ESL teachers of some of their duties and thus increase the instructional time with the ESL teacher. They in turn provide the necessary follow-up to the instruction, and assist with the small cooperative group activities. Measuring the "direct impact" or "effectiveness" the teacher assistants have on learning will remain an important question for the evaluation during the third and final year of the Title VII Newcomers Program.

COSTS

Students in the Title VII Newcomers Program received varying amounts of service, and this was due primarily to the high degree of mobility in the immigrant population. In the spring 1992 semester, nine students were "mainstreamed" into a regular schedule because they had either completed their two semesters or were ready for a regular ESL classroom environment. Of the 104 students served throughout the school year, two students withdrew during the fall semester, and four completed the fall semester, but did not register for the spring semester. During the spring semester five students withdrew at different intervals, but they completed the work of the fall semester. One student was served briefly during the spring semester but had to relocate.

The cost per student was calculated in two ways. The first calculation was made by dividing the total number of students served by the total cost of the program. This calculation resulted in a cost of $1346 per student for the 1991-92 academic year. In the second calculation, the entry and exit dates for each student were examined with the purpose of determining how many days the student had been in attendance. Once days of attendance had been established the number of contact hours could be ascertained. Based on the days of attendance it was calculated that there had been 77,886 contact hours during the school year. Dividing the budget ($140,000) by the total number of contact hours resulted in a cost of $1.80 per contact hour.

SERVICES

TRAINING PROVIDED TO TEACHERS AND TEACHER ASSISTANTS

Title VII funds provided orientation sessions and teacher workshops for the three program teachers and three teacher assistants. The participants thought that the workshops were very educational and beneficial.

The three Title VII teachers and three teacher assistants were provided with 11 workshops during the 1991-92 school year. All program teachers and teacher assistants attended the training sessions. The sessions were conducted in the three Title VII program classroom sites. The topics covered in the workshops were:

- Computer use (2),
- Cooperative learning strategies (3),
- New ESL curriculum (3), and
- Parental involvement, program evaluation strategies and procedures, and program improvement (1 each).

The workshops sponsored by the Title VII program provided the staff with a working group with whom to exchange experiences and ideas. In their opinion the training sessions had been "helpful," "beneficial," and "timely." The hands-on computer training was particularly helpful.

The teachers and teacher assistants received a stipend for their attendance at the workshops.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHERS AND TEACHER ASSISTANTS

The teachers and teacher assistants utilized a portion of the Title VII monies available to advance their teaching credentials.

College tuition monies were available to teachers and teacher assistants to continue with academic courses that would enhance their teaching skills. Some of the college tuition allocation was used in the following manner:

- One teacher completed ESL certification.
- One teacher is taking course work in ESL methodology for oral language development and in theories of second language acquisition.
- One teacher assistant completed ESL certification.
- One teacher assistant completed course work in computer use and Spanish, and completed six hours of course work towards ESL certification.

On the Staff Survey the teachers and teacher assistants expressed a desire to continue taking academic course work through the summer and fall semesters of 1992.

OUTREACH TO PARENTS

Parents of Title VII newcomers were provided with a variety of activities designed to orient them to the school district's expectations of their children and to offer them relevant information and support.

There were several kinds of outreach made to parents of the Title VII newcomers, and these were met with a good response. At the beginning of the 1991 fall semester, there was one orientation workshop at each of the high schools, Austin, Lanier, and Reagan. At these meetings, a general orientation to schools was provided, the Title VII program's goals and services were discussed, and a survey was administered by the bilingual parent involvement specialist to gather parental input on topics that were of interest for future meetings. In the spring 1992 semester a series of five workshops was presented by a bilingual psychologist at Austin and Reagan High Schools and at two other sites accessible to bilingual parents. The topics of discussion were:

- General information about adolescent behavior,
- Issues involved in second language acquisition and classroom activities directly related to learning a second language,
- Dangers and pressures of the peer group, drugs and alcohol issues,
- Sexuality and sexually transmitted diseases, and
- Local social service agencies and their services to the community.

These meetings were well attended, and parents were encouraged to participate and ask questions. In addition, the Districtwide Parent Advisory Council for Bilingual Education was active throughout the school year developing a support system for parents.

STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES

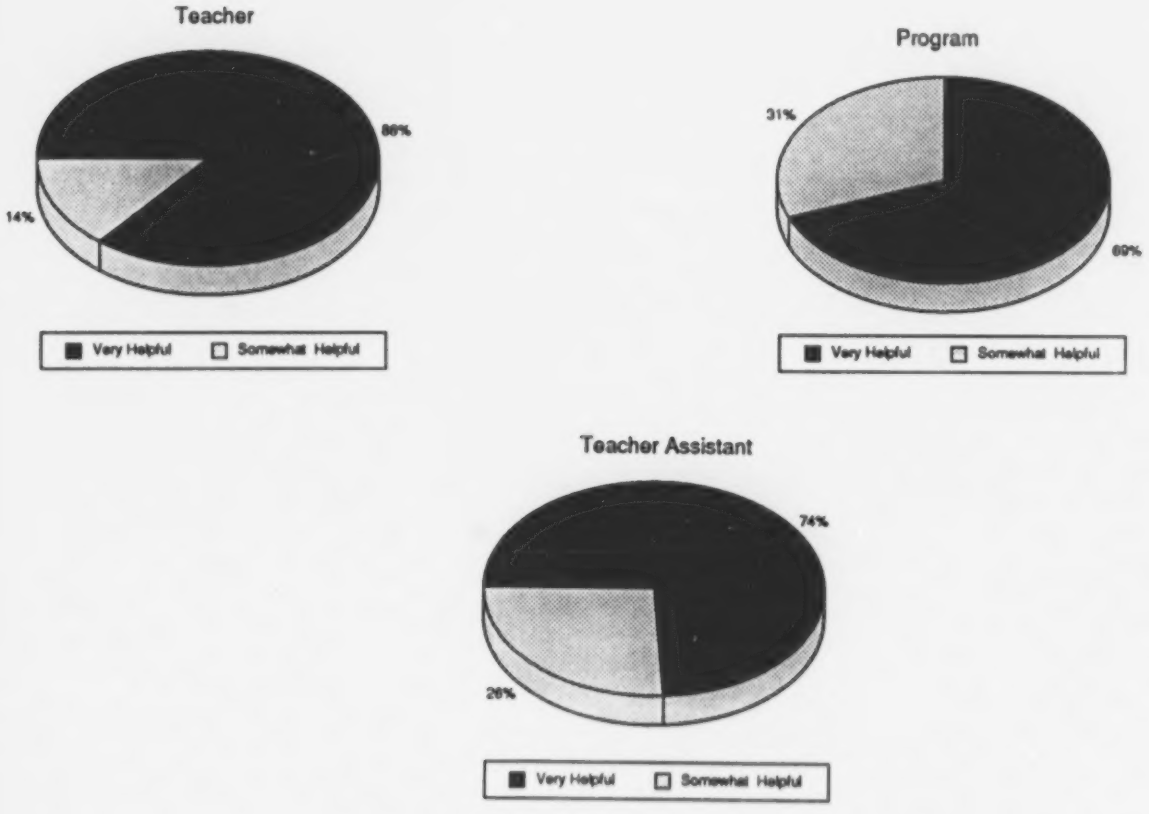
SUMMARY OF STUDENT SURVEY

In the opinion of the newcomers their overall experience with the Title VII program was positive and helpful. The program provided a sheltered and supportive environment in which both the processes of English language acquisition and acculturation were facilitated.

In April 1992, the students in the Title VII Newcomers Program were asked to complete a survey as a classroom activity. The teachers and their assistants administered the surveys and were available to assist the students with any questions. The surveys were available in English, Vietnamese, and Spanish versions, and the students could choose whichever language was most comfortable for them. Of the 80 newcomers, 70 (88%) were in attendance to complete the survey on the day it was administered.

In the opinion of most the students, the program, teachers, and teacher assistants were very helpful (see Figure 14).

FIGURE 14
HELPFULNESS OF 1991-92 TITLE VII
NEWCOMERS PROGRAM, TEACHERS, TEACHER ASSISTANTS

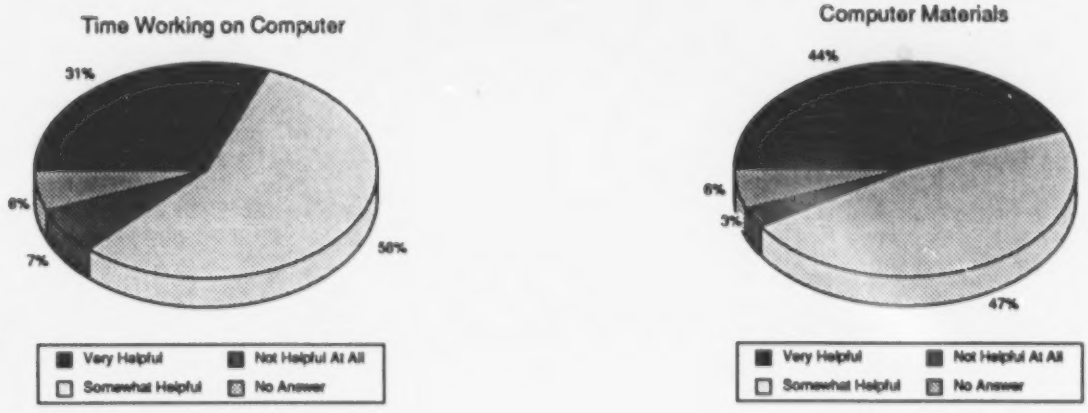


Three critical components in the design of the program were:

- The time spent working on the computers and computer materials,
- The opportunity to study and practice English in three-hour blocks, and
- Studying and learning in small groups.

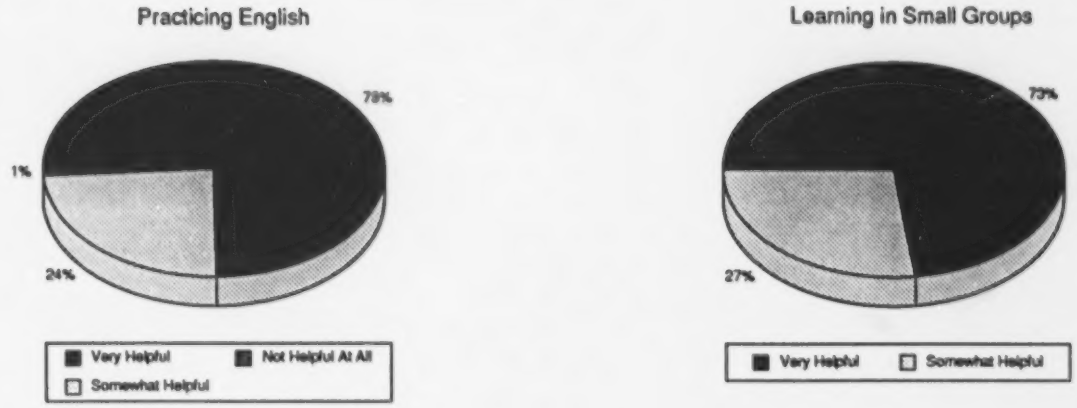
Almost all of the students (91%) found the computer materials "very" or "somewhat helpful." A majority of students (56%) reported time spent working on the computer was "somewhat helpful," but some students (31%) found the time on the computer "very helpful" (see Figure 15).

FIGURE 15
HELPFULNESS OF 1991-92 TITLE VII NEWCOMERS PROGRAM
COMPUTER MATERIALS AND TIME
SPENT WORKING ON COMPUTERS



Cooperative learning strategies were utilized to have students work in small groups and to provide assistance and support to each other. All students found learning in small groups either "very" or "somewhat helpful." The students found the opportunity to study and practice English three hours daily "very" or "somewhat helpful" (see Figure 16).

FIGURE 16
1991-92 TITLE VII NEWCOMERS PROGRAM
HELPFULNESS OF LEARNING IN SMALL GROUPS AND
PRACTICING ENGLISH THREE HOURS DAILY

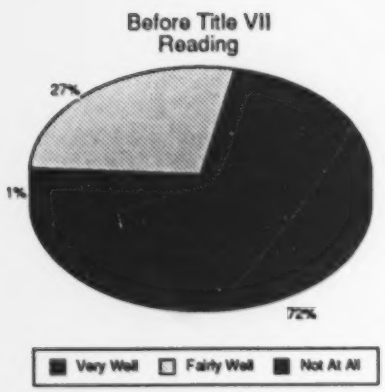


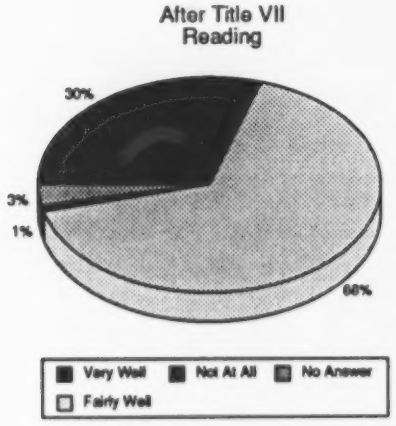
Feeling welcome and gaining confidence to remain in school were viewed as two areas that would assure the newcomers success in completing their high school curriculum. *Almost all of the students (94%) felt either "very" or "fairly welcome" in their school environment. The response was very positive to staying in school as a result of the program (see Figure 17).*

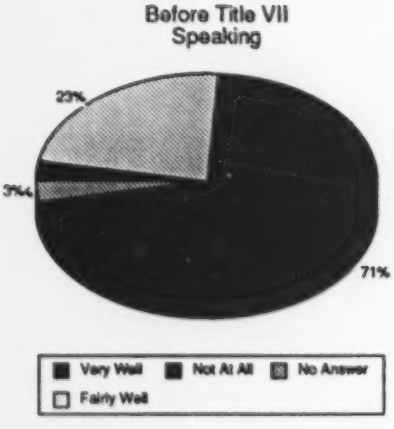
FIGURE 17
1991-92 TITLE VII NEWCOMERS PROGRAM
FEELING WELCOME IN SCHOOL AND
FEELING CONFIDENT AS A RESULT OF PROGRAM

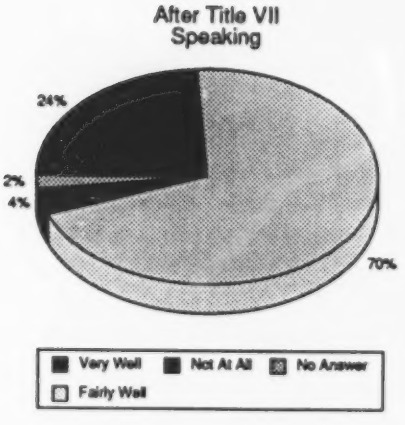
The newcomers were asked to rate their abilities to read and speak English before and after their participation in the program. The students rated their skills on a scale ranging from "very well," to "fairly well," to "not at all." **In their opinion, there had been a significant improvement in speaking and reading English.** Before the program, 71% did not read or speak English at all, and after the program 66% read fairly well, and 70% spoke fairly well (see Figure 18).

FIGURE 18
1991-92 TITLE VII NEWCOMERS PROGRAM
READING AND SPEAKING ENGLISH
BEFORE AND AFTER PARTICIPATION









In summary, the newcomers found the program to be very beneficial not only academically but also as they made the transition to a different language and culture. The teachers and teacher assistants provided classroom experiences that encouraged the students to learn and fostered the development of self-confidence. The combination of experiencing academic and personal success provided the newcomers with the impetus to continue with their studies.

Student comments from the survey:

"The teachers treated me well, [and] they helped me when I had doubts about my school work. With their help and my desire and determination to learn English, I will learn to speak English well."

"I think this program is very good for all the immigrants who do not know English.... When I miss my home country everyone encourages and reassures me."

"This is a fabulous program. Because of my teacher I have been able to become more self-assured, she is excellent and I appreciate her. Many thanks for the support given to me by the Newcomers Program."

SUMMARY OF STAFF SURVEY

The project staff viewed the second-year Title VII Newcomers Program as "effective" and "positive." The program continued to be helpful and unique by providing students with the opportunity to acquire English language skills in a sheltered environment with English instruction in a three-hour block and other activities that assisted students in becoming successful in the total school environment. The concerns expressed and areas of improvement identified are issues that require long-term planning.

In order to elicit opinions, ideas, concerns, and suggestions, a survey was administered to ESL teachers, teacher assistants, principals, LPAC chairpersons, and other campus staff who participated in the Title VII Newcomers Program. The following is a summary of their responses.

The opinion of the staff in general was that the program was very effective and that it assisted the students in making the transition to English and to the school culture.

Administrators:

The administrators regarded the program as addressing the special language needs of immigrant students. Administrators thought that a special program like the Newcomers Program can address such needs because limited-English-proficient students who have been in the U.S. for less than one year need intensive English instruction to acquire the skills to achieve and continue with school.

Teachers:

The teachers regarded the program as an opportunity for students to become successful with life and to begin the gradual process of acculturation. The three-hour block for intensive English instruction was a critical factor in accelerating the transition to English.

Teacher Assistants:

The teacher assistants thought that the program facilitated students' transition to the English language, encouraged personal growth and development, and strengthened the students' determination to complete their studies in the United States.

Positive Findings According to Program Staff:

The following list from the Staff Survey includes most of the program activities that in the opinion of the staff worked well:

- The implementation of picture dictionaries, 10-minute silent reading, daily oral language exercises, and three hours to teach and reinforce language concepts and skills;
- The utility of computers and related technologies to classroom instruction, especially touch window and TAAS software;
- The ordering and receiving of new materials in a timely manner for the classroom, testing, and paperwork specifically related to the program;
- Having teacher assistants to support the instructional efforts of the teacher;
- The "excellent" cooperation between program teachers, bilingual coordinator, and teacher assistants;
- The orientation to the American culture and educational system; and
- Mainstreaming former students into core classes and appropriate placement of current students.

Program Components in Need of Remediation According to Program Staff:

Among the activities mentioned as not having worked well and/or in need of improvement were the following.

- Particular classroom textbooks were not useful.
- The allocation of credits based on academic records from home countries could be more structured and systematic.
- Additional flexibility for ESL teachers to participate in the process of determining how many hours of English would be best for incoming students.
- There is a need to set time aside to create the necessary opportunities to explain the program and its goals to the entire school staff.
- There were changes in staffing that required adjustment and additional role clarification.
- The role of the teacher assistant could be further explained and clarified.
- It is important to develop strategies to coordinate and identify entering students and to complete all of the necessary paperwork in a timely manner.

Areas of Concern According to Program Staff:

From the Staff Survey the following specific concerns about the current year's program implementation were identified:

- Three periods come out of the campus teacher allocations, and this schedule adjustment often creates the problem of either very small classes or class overloads in other areas.
- There is a question as to whether the needs of Vietnamese students are being addressed.
- There needs to be more discussion of the program's curriculum and if it should be uniform at all three sites.
- Better textbooks for classroom use are necessary.
- The Title VII Newcomers Program needs to be recognized as an integral part of the entire school.
- Additional cultural sensitivity workshops for content area teachers and administrators are important to facilitate mainstreaming of newcomers in the future.
- An increase in staff development workshops on ESL methodology for both content area and ESL teachers and workshops on utilizing computers for instructional purposes would be beneficial.

Staff Suggestions for Program Improvement During its Third Year:

- Give more support and instruction to Title VII Newcomer Program students in mathematics (algebra) and science (physical) through the program.
- Provide more staff development for administrators, content area teachers, and ESL teachers on cultural differences and awareness, cooperative learning strategies, and how to maximize use of computer technology in the classroom.
- ESL teachers and teacher assistants should work together in the summer to plan for program guidelines and to prepare curriculum that would be consistent at all program sites.
- Pretest in math to assure appropriate placement for all students.
- Allow more flexibility in scheduling students who may need less than three hours of ESL instruction, and make provision for better books at varying instructional levels.

The program evaluation for the second year included a list of teacher characteristics considered to be essential by the program coordinator to the success of the program. Among the identified characteristics were:

- Commitment to students,
- Ability to work well with the teacher assistant,
- Cultural sensitivity,
- High motivation and the ability to motivate others,
- Enthusiasm, and
- Ability to find and utilize community resources.

From classroom observations made throughout the year by the bilingual coordinator it was noted that all of the teachers were:

- Highly motivated,
- Able to solve problems,
- Capable of working well with the teacher assistant, and
- Aware of cultural differences and had made every possible effort to incorporate the diversity of the various cultural groups into the learning experience.

The finding and utilizing of community resources will continue to be an area needing further development. The administrators said that teacher and teacher assistant relationships were professional and functioned well.

In summary, the staff concluded that the second year of the Title VII Newcomers Program was successful and addressed the needs of a very specific student population. Improvement in certain areas continues to merit attention, and planning for such areas will be addressed through staff development.

1991-92 NEWCOMER SUCCESS STORIES

One of the Title VII program goals is that students gain sufficient confidence to continue with their education and eventually graduate from high school. One way of encouraging students in the attainment of this important goal is by asking them to participate in extracurricular activities. In the process of becoming involved in school activities they meet other students, practice their newly acquired English skills, and experience the school culture. Involvement with school activities provides the newcomers with familiarity with their school environment and, it is hoped, affords them a feeling of being welcomed.

Space prohibits including all of the school activities in which the newcomers engage, but the following list provides a sample of their involvement.

Two students were given "Pride" awards for their hard work. They had their pictures displayed on the Wall of Pride at their high school.

In one high school four students were recipients of the 1992 AISD School Board of Trustee's scholarship, an academic scholarship which recognizes students by grade whose grade point averages (GPA) falls in the top 10% of the class. In a different high school, two freshmen and three sophomores were given the same scholarship.

At another high school, seven newcomers (three freshmen, three sophomores, and one junior) made the honor roll during the fifth six weeks.

At the University of Texas at Austin, students were administered the National Spanish Examination. Among the students tested were three newcomers who tied for 1st place, while another newcomer took 4th place in Level 3, the category for native speakers of Spanish.

Thirty newcomers were the recipients of tuition scholarships from the local bilingual ESL budget for them to continue receiving ESL instruction during the summer school program.

STATUS OF FORMER (1990-91) TITLE VII STUDENTS

OTHER MEASURES OF SCHOOL SUCCESS, ACHIEVEMENT, AND GRADUATION

One of the long range goals of the Title VII Newcomers Program is to see that the students remain in school and ultimately graduate. According to the evaluation plan for the Title VII Newcomers Program, information for a longitudinal study was to be collected on former newcomers. Information was gathered by using the GENeric Evaluation SYStem (GENESYS). GENESYS is a method of streamlining data collection and evaluation for a wide variety of projects; it gathers and reports a great deal of information on the characteristics and outcomes of particular groups of students.

Of the 108 students from school year 1990-91, most of them (85%, N=92) returned for their second year of schooling in the United States. The remaining students (15%, N=16) did not register in August 1991. Whether the nonreturning students relocated, transferred to another school district, or entered the working world is not known. The students continue to be at risk of dropping out because they continue to have the characteristics associated with the population that tends to drop out of high school.

Achievement

Achievement on both the NAPT and the TAAS continues to be lower in all areas when compared to high school students at AISD, and below the national average on the NAPT. Performance on standardized achievement examinations has historically been difficult for some language minority students.

Other Measures of School Success

See Figure 19 for a comparison between AISD high school students and 1990-91 Title VII Newcomers during the 1991-92 school year on a variety of indicators.

FIGURE 19
1990-91 TITLE VII NEWCOMERS VS. HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

INDICATORS	AISD		FORMER NEWCOMERS	
	FALL '91	SPRING '92	FALL '91	SPRING '92
Attendance	92.5%	91.1%	93.7%	92.3%
Grades	80.6%	80.7%	80.3%	80.9%
Retention*	N/A	5.3%	N/A	0.9%
Dropout Rate	7.8%	X	14.8%	X
Predicted Rate**	4.6%	X	7.7%	X
Obtained Rate***	4.6%	X	5.4%	X

* Percent for the entire year. ** The percentage of program students predicted to dropout.
*** Actual percent of students who drop out; if percent is lower than what was predicted this means that the program did better than anticipated.
X = Rates are for fall semester only.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

See Figure 20 for facts on former newcomers.

FIGURE 20
SALIENT FACTS ON FORMER NEWCOMERS

- **Most students have continued with their education,**
- **Most students have earned academic credits at approximately the same rate as last year.**
- **Most students have not been retained, and**
- **Most students have not dropped out at predicted rates.**

Graduation

Students coming to the United States from foreign countries must make many adjustments in order to function in American schools. Oftentimes the transcripts that they bring with them are difficult to interpret because the educational programs in their home countries are different from programs in the U.S. Among the differences in the academic programs from other countries are programs and schools for students who are university bound, who are in vocational tracks, or are not involved in any permanent academic plan. The diversity of educational programs, and how credit is assigned to course work in other countries, can create a problem of how those courses are comparable to educational courses in American schools. Another major difference is that some students come from rural areas that do not have educational programs beyond secondary schools (including grades 7-9), so students experiences not only vary, but may be limited.

According to central records, 16 former newcomer students were high school seniors in 1991-92. Of the 16 students, six (38%) were able to graduate in May 1992. These newcomers were successful in accumulating the necessary academic credits, and in passing the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills which includes proficiency tests in reading, writing and mathematics. Of the remaining 10 (62%) students, all completed the fall 1991 semester. Three students withdrew in the spring 1992 semester, and two of the three withdrew with the expected number of credits and a 79.4 GPA; only one student withdrew while failing. In terms of other measures of school success, the seven seniors maintained a GPA of 82.2, and they earned an average of 2.7 academic credits in the fall semester. The spring semester was very similar inasmuch as the average of academic credits stayed the same, and the GPA of 81.6 was slightly less than the fall semester.

Separate interviews were conducted with two graduating seniors in an effort to identify some of the characteristics that had contributed to the students' success. The following profiles are descriptive of the two students.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PROFILES OF TWO GRADUATING FORMER TITLE VII STUDENTS

MARGARITA

Margarita (not student's real name) is from a rural community in southern Mexico in the state of Guerrero. She had been enrolled in her last year of preparatory school with an emphasis in business administration, and had made plans towards attending a Mexican university. Shortly after her arrival in the U.S., she registered at one of the program high schools. Margarita had no previous experience or training in English; all of her schooling had been in Spanish.

Margarita found her teacher and teacher assistant to be very helpful. They provided much encouragement and made learning English a reality. Her fellow classmates also contributed to her learning and making the transition to a new environment and culture. Margarita was able to compete in a poetry contest through her high school Spanish class and won 3rd place. She and her newcomer classmates needed to feel useful, and took it upon themselves to beautify their campus by planting trees. She received recognition from the student honor society by being the recipient of a green medal.

Her father provided encouragement and support, he attended school meetings, and intervened when she was in the process of having her Mexican transcript appraised. Her plans after graduation are to continue improving her English and to attend the local community college.

Her advice to students is the following: "Study hard and do everything you can possibly do to learn. Make the decision to finish with your schooling it will be difficult; but it is possible [to finish]."

To the Newcomer Program, she says, "Give the students support, assist them in their feelings of aloneness. Tell them [students] they can get beyond the language barrier and eventually graduate. Help them understand the relationships between the different classes, how and what those classes are like, and how they are part of a graduation plan."

ROLANDO

Rolando (not student's real name) had been in the United States two months before enrolling in the Title VII Newcomers Program. He came from a rural community in the central part of San Luis Potosi. He had completed two years and three months of preparatory school and was looking forward to university training. He had a little bit of training in English while he was in Mexico. Rolando relocated to join his family that had preceded him in moving to the United States. At the time of his move, his intention was to work, not to attend school.

School had been confusing at first; it took two months before he was placed in the program. The Newcomers program was in its initial phases, and was in the process of acquiring computers and instructional materials. It took Rolando a semester before he felt comfortable with school. His teacher was very helpful, and when he experienced a difficulty she took a special interest in assisting him in finding a solution. Rolando found the program very helpful in adjusting to school, and in learning.

Rolando frequently worked after school, and on weekends with a lawn service. The woman he works for has been very nice and has encouraged him to continue with his studies. His plans are to keep on working until the necessary arrangements are made, so he can attend college. He would like to study a profession that deals with building construction, some type of engineering, or architecture.

His mother was very supportive, and she provided him with encouragement and moral support. Because of her work schedule she was unable to attend meetings or come to school frequently. She was able to attend one of the parent lectures with the bilingual psychologist.

His advice to his fellow newcomers is, "Put forth a great deal of effort. It [school] will be difficult. Try to establish relationships with English-speaking students, so you can practice your English skills. Make sure you utilize the opportunity of participating in the Newcomers program."

To the Newcomers program, he says, "Help students with time management, assist them with learning how to make the best use of it [time]. The age of students makes a difference in terms of levels of maturity; help them discover where they want to go."

REFERENCES

Derby, N.J. (1976). Final evaluation 1975-76 ESAA III Pilot Project Assist (Pub. No. 75.47). Austin, TX: Austin Independent School District, Office of Research and Evaluation.

Rumbaut, M. (1991). Title VII Newcomers Program in AISD 1990-91 (Pub. No. 90.38). Austin, TX: Austin Independent School District, Office of Research and Evaluation.

Schuyler, N.B. (1986). Bilingual/ESL programs 1985-86 final technical report (Pub. No. 85.56). Austin, TX: Austin Independent School District, Office of Research and Evaluation.

Schuyler, N. B. (1987, April). Can evaluation make a difference? The case of instructional aides in Austin. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Washington, D.C.

Wilkinson, L.D. A review of the literature on the effectiveness of teacher aides (Pub. No. 76.10). Austin, TX: Austin Independent School District, Office of Research and Evaluation.

Austin Independent School District

Department of Management Information
Dr. Glynn Ligon, Executive Director

Office of Research and Evaluation
Dr. Evangelina Mangino, Assistant Director

Systemwide Evaluation
David Wilkinson, Evaluator

Author:
Rosa María González, Evaluation Associate

Contributing Staff:
Stacy Buffington, Programmer/Analyst
Veda K. Raju, Programmer/Analyst
Leonila M. González, Secretary

Board of Trustees
Dr. Beatriz de la Garza, President
Kathy Rider, Vice President
Dr. Gary McKenzie, Secretary

Diana Castañeda
Bernice Hart
Liz Hartman
Melissa Knippa
John Lay
Ted Whatley

Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Jim B. Hensley

Publication Number 91.22
August 1992